

EPA'S REVISED AUDIT POLICY – Effective May 11, 2000

General Information

Formal Title: “Incentives for Self-Policing: Discovery, Disclosure, Correction and Prevention of Violations”

Citation: 65 FR 19,617 (April 11, 2000)

Web Site: www.epa.gov/oeca/auditpol.html

Purpose

To encourage regulated entities to voluntarily discover, disclose, correct and prevent violations of Federal environmental requirements

Incentives Available Under the Audit Policy

Penalty mitigation – Entities that meet all of the conditions contained in the Audit Policy are eligible for 100% mitigation of all gravity-based penalties. Entities that meet all of the conditions except for “systematic discovery” of violations are eligible for 75% penalty mitigation. EPA retains its discretion to collect any economic benefit that may have been realized as a result of noncompliance.

No recommendation for criminal prosecution – For entities that disclose violations of criminal law and meet all applicable conditions under the Policy, the Agency will refrain from recommending criminal prosecution for the disclosing entity.

No routine requests for audit reports – In general, EPA will not request audit reports from those who disclose under the Audit Policy.

To Make a Disclosure Under the Audit Policy

Disclosures of civil violations should be made to the EPA Region in which the entity or facility is located or, where multiple Regions are involved, to EPA Headquarters. For more information, contact Leslie Jones at 202-564-5123.

Disclosures of criminal violations should be made to the appropriate EPA criminal investigation division, to EPA Headquarters, or to the U.S. Department of Justice. For more information, contact Michael Penders at 202-564-2526.

Conditions of the Audit Policy – Entities that satisfy the following conditions are eligible for Audit Policy benefits. (Note: entities that fail to meet the first condition – systematic discovery – are eligible for 75% penalty mitigation and for no recommendation for criminal recommendation).

Systematic discovery of the violation through an environmental audit or a compliance management system.

Voluntary discovery, that is, not through a legally required monitoring, sampling or auditing procedure.

Prompt disclosure in writing to EPA within 21 days of discovery or such shorter time as may be required by law (discovery occurs when any officer, director, employee or agent of the facility has an objectively reasonable basis for believing that a violation has or may have occurred).

Independent discovery and disclosure, before EPA likely would have identified the violation through its own investigation or based on information provided by a third-party.

Correction and remediation within 60 calendar days, in most cases, from the date of discovery.

Prevent recurrence of the violation.

Repeat violations are ineligible, that is, those that have occurred at the same facility within the past 3 years or those that have occurred as part of a pattern of violations within the past 5 years at another facility(ies) owned or operated by the same company; if the facility has been newly acquired, the existence of a violation prior to acquisition does not trigger the repeat violations exclusion.

Certain types of violations are ineligible – those that result in serious actual harm, those that may have presented an imminent and substantial endangerment, and those that violate the specific terms of an administrative or judicial order or consent agreement.

Cooperation by the disclosing entity is required.